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SUBJECT: HALLELUIA; MOI SECURITY COMMITTEE UNCOVERS HOW BAD BASRAH REALLY IS

REF: A. A. Baghdad 1851

[1](#)B. B. Basrah 50

BASRAH 00000051 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Louis L. Bono, Regional Director, REO Basrah, DOS.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. In a two-hour meeting with the Regional Director on June 7, the Interior Ministry committee charged with evaluating Basrah's security situation quickly admitted that they found security in Basrah to be very poor and laid the blame squarely on the chief of Police, Iraqi Police Service, the Iraqi Army's 10th Division, the Emergency Security Committee, political parties and factions, and the governor. Stating that police were tasked to do additional duties for political parties and that a lack of confidence between all of the factions added to the instability, the committee did come up with a number of proposals to submit to Prime Minister Maliki (PM) in order to try and redress the situation. Corruption, Iranian and Arab Gulf country interference, and weak Basrah Provincial Council leadership were also highlighted as causes behind Basrah's abysmal security. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On June 7 the Regional Director, Deputy Regional Director, and Regional Security Officer met with Ministry of Interior's Security committee charged by the PM with evaluating the security situation in Basrah. The committee was led by Major General Rasheed Flayeeh and included Major General Mahdi Al Garawi, the Assistant Deputy of Police Affairs, Major General Abbas, the Support Forces representative, and Brigadier General Hudur, the Inspector General's representative. The committee, in Basrah for almost two weeks, has had 13 site visits and 45 meetings with, amongst others, tribal leaders, the governor, the Basrah Provincial Council (BPC), the British military, and all of the political parties and blocs in Basrah. Not surprisingly, they reported that they found the security situation "not good at all" and planned on submitting a list of suggested changes to the Prime Minister in order to avoid "anarchy" in the province.

[1](#)3. (C) Stating that Basrah needed a "strategic security plan" due to its location as the axis or gateway for Iraq, Major General Mahdi said that Basrah needed to get back under Iraqi control and to be protected from the Iranian threat, particularly the Iranian intelligence units that operate out of Basrah. Mahdi also stated that the GCC were also trying to control Basrah and had recently formed a joint operations center to try and keep Basrah, and specifically its ports, out of

Iranian control. According to Mahdi, the joint operations center is being headed up by UAE's Interior Minister and has a working budget of three billion dollars. Its goal was to control Basrah's ports through specific projects and construction works and by using humanitarian organizations to gather intelligence. Either way, Mahdi added, the Iranian and Gulfies' plans can only be countered by a strong security apparatus, something that Basrah currently does not have.

Examples of Weak Basrah

¶4. (C) According to Mahdi, Basrah's Iraqi Police Service (IPS) is in very poor shape. The police chief needs to be replaced and a non-Basrawi put into the position. When asked about reports that Major General Jalil Khaluf Shwayid was poised to be the next police chief, the committee members were clear that it was not possible; Jalil was from the Defense Ministry and the police chief had to come from the Interior Ministry. Stating that he knew Jalil personally, Mahdi said that the decision still had not been made but they would urge the PM to replace the current police chief quickly since the situation was serious. (Note: On June 3, Prime Minister Maliki told the Ministerial Committee for National Security that he planned to appoint Jalil as Basrah police chief. (See ref. A.) End note.)

¶5. (C) Some of the problems that they uncovered included the discovery of two fake IPS battalions that were masquerading around in police uniforms, acting as personal security detail, and conducting operations without any proper authorization for the past eight months. Mahdi stated that the Emergency Security Committee (ESC) knew about their existence for some time and never reported it. Two recently arrested members of the fake battalions confessed to committing over twenty killings on the orders of unnamed superiors. Mahdi also questioned the reason for the ESC's continued existence.

¶6. (C) Additionally, the committees found that the BPC's 500 police bodyguards were mostly non-existent. They were able to find only 50 on the job. The rest they believe were out

BASRAH 00000051 002.2 OF 002

committing crimes, including killings, in the city. A similar find occurred with the governor's protective detail. Out of 430 men, they could only find 70 on the job. At the National Iraqi Intelligence Agency (NIIA)'s Basrah office, the committee found 400 individuals on the books who are not actually in the office working to collect intelligence. They also discovered 56 NIIA cars unaccounted for. (Note. ISF militia members often use official cars when carrying out crimes and attacks. End note.)

¶7. (C) According to the committee, the Serious Crimes Unit (SCU), which the British claimed to have disbanded in the Jameat raid on Christmas morning 2006, is still in existence and active. The committee stated that the SCU, the most notorious and nefarious of the corrupt police units, was simply purged of some personnel and is currently active, working for both the public interest and for Ja'ish Al Mehdi (JAM) at the same time.

¶8. (S) Mahdi stated that when the committee heard about some Iraqi Army 10th Infantry Division (10th ID) officers recently being taken hostage, having their heads shaved, and their humvees burned to the ground, they realized that the problem is not just with the IPS. (See ref. B.) Mahdi made the point, supported by the others, that three battalions of the 10th ID need to be replaced with soldiers from outside of Basrah, a suggestion that General Habib, the 10th ID commanding officer, supports.

¶9. (S) Lastly, Mahdi asked the director outright if the governor should be replaced or should be retained, albeit with different powers, in the near term. The director said that Iraqis had to make such decisions for themselves. He added that in order to stabilize Basrah, the GoI must consider the political power struggle between Fadhila and the United Iraqi Alliance, at the national level, as well as the personal enmity that exists between Basrah's political leaders. He also said

that Fadhila's hold on the governorship maintains a balance of power in Basrah. Mahdi agreed; he said the governor should not be removed so close to the elections, and that to do so would create "an anarchy-type situation." He did advise that if the governor was kept on, he should have "his wings clipped" and some of his powers and militia removed from him. Stating that Al Wa'eli is "a very strong man and a decision-maker and someone who we need in the current situation," Mahdi made it clear that he, if not the committee, preferred to keep him in place for the time being since he still has influence in every part of Basrah and "he can help" the situation.

¶10. (S) Flayeeh told the director that the committee plans to provide ten suggestions to the GoI to improve security in Basrah:

- 1) Purge twenty percent of the IPS in Basrah.
- 2) Replace the police chief within 30 days with someone from outside of Basrah.
- 3) Determine the status of the governor within the province. The PM must make a decisive decision on this as soon as possible,
- 4) Issue a decree by the PM to prohibit all political parties, nongovernmental organizations and other groups to interfere with police affairs.
- 5) Return all police members to regular active duty and return all police property (such as cars) to allow the police to do their work out of police stations rather than out of political party offices and residences.
- 6) Issue license plates to all Oil Facilities Protective Services vehicles in order to differentiate them from other official vehicles that do not carry license plates. Minimize the use of police vehicles for other use.
- 7) Open five manufacturing plants to promote employment, as an alternative to the militias. The five plants would be in petrochemicals, steel, cement, paper, and port infrastructure rehabilitation.
- 8) Form a commando unit under the authority of the police chief with 30 to 40 percent of the slots to be filled from outside the province.
- 9) Request support from Coalition Forces to continue training incoming police and to provide human rights training for all police officers.
- 10) Request support from Coalition Forces to reinforce Coast Guard units with steel-hulled craft and heavy weaponry in order to better interdict the heavily-armed smugglers on the Shatt al-Arab.

The director said the list is a good start, but with provincial Iraqi control likely to occur in August or September, the window of opportunity is closing.

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